

What's in a Name?

This week's reading from **Parashat Shemot** (*Shemot / Exodus 1:1-6:1*) list in summary form the sons of Israel who had descended to Egypt. The opening verses tell us that Joseph and all of his brothers had passed away and a new king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph (*1:1-7*). What is interesting to observe in the biblical narrative, is these events are not described in the typical fashion, *e.g. one king died and then another rose up in his place*. It is possible that the previous king may still have been alive. This new king of Egypt however feared the people of Israel and placed them into slavery (*1:9-14*). According to Parshiot Miketz, Vayigash, and Vayechi, we are told that the years of blessing were seven, and the years of famine were also seven. We are told in the book of Genesis, that the famine was so great, the people sold all that they had and then finally selling their own lives into servitude for food. Pharaoh said in the opening passages, *וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַמּוֹ הַזֶּה עַם הַנְּהָה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעַצִּיּוֹם מִמֶּנּוּ: 1:9* *He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. (NASB)* and so this new king placed Israel into slavery being afraid because of their numbers. If the people were so numerous, why didn't they simply raise up and stop the enslavement? Why do you think up until this point in time the people did not travel back to the land of Canaan? The Lord was bringing to pass the vision He had given to Abraham of the 400 years of servitude in Mitzrayim. According to *Bereshit / Genesis 47:28*, Jacob lived 17 years in Egypt before he died, this appears to be a significant amount of time following the famine. Daat Zkenim on *Bereshit / Genesis 47:28, Part 2* explains the number of years could have been calculated from the Torah text, however, the number of years is explicitly written, *"The point the Torah wished us to appreciate is that just as for the first seventeen years of his life Yaakov, his father, had provided for him, during the last seventeen years of his life, his son Joseph provided for his father."* So the prophetic word God had given Joseph was fulfilled. In a similar manner, the prophetic word was fulfilled in the Lord providing a deliverer for Israel, through whom the might and power of God would be worked to save the people bringing them out of bondage by the mighty hand of the Lord God in heaven.

ספר שמות פרק ב *Shemot / Exodus 2:5-10*

א וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח
אֶת-בַּת-לְוִי: ב וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה
וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרֶא אֹתוֹ כִּי-טוֹב
הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: ג
וְלֹא-יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצְּפִינוּ וַתִּקַּח-
לוֹ תִּבְתֹּ גָמָא וַתַּחְמְרָה בַּחֲמֹר
וּבְנֹפֶת וַתִּשֹׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד
וַתִּשֹׂם בְּסוּף עַל-שְׂפַת הַיָּאָר:
ד וַתִּמְצָב אָחִיתוֹ מֵרְחֹק לְדַעַה
מֵה-יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: ה וַתֵּרֶד בַּת-
פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל-הַיָּאָר וַנַּעֲרֹ-
תִיהָ הַלְכֹת עַל-יַד הַיָּאָר וַתֵּרֶא
אֶת-הַתִּבָּה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח
אֶת-אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקְחֶהָ: ו וַתִּפְתַּח
וַתֵּרֶא אֹת-הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה-נֹעַר
בְּכֹה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי-
לְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה: ז וַתֹּאמֶר
אָחִיתוֹ אֶל-בַּת-פַּרְעֹה הַאֵלֶּף
וְקָרָאתִי לָהּ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקַת מִן
הָעִבְרִית וַתִּינַק לָהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד:
ח וַתֹּאמֶר-לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה לְכִי
וַתֵּלֶךְ הַעֲלֵמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-אִם
הַיֶּלֶד: ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה
הִילִיכִי אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינִקְהוּ
לִי וְאֲנִי אֲתֵן אֶת-שְׂכָרְךָ וַתִּקַּח
הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּנְיָקֵהוּ: י וַיִּגַּד-
דָּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּבְאֵהוּ לְבַת-פַּרְעֹה
וַיְהִי-לָהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה
וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן-הַמַּיִם מָשִׂיתָהוּ:

2:1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. 2:2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. 2:3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. 2:4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. 2:5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. 2:6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.' 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?' 2:8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go ahead. So the girl went and called the child's mother. 2:9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed him. 2:10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, 'Because I drew him out of the water.' (NASB)

In the second chapter of the book of Exodus, we are told of a son who was born that would deliver the people from bondage. Note how the text

is written saying, וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בֵּת-לֵוִי: א 2:1 *Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. (NASB)* The text states “a man” (איש) from the house of Levi (לְוִי) took a “daughter” (בַּת) of Levi (לְוִי). We are not told who the man or woman are but that simply they were from the tribe of Levi. This suggests that the Lord God is able to use anyone for His purposes. (Note that later on their names are written down in *Shemot / Exodus 6:2-13*) The birth of Moshe is a miraculous event, and this point is drawn out by the rabbis according to the Targum Pseudo Jonathan.

Targum Pseudo Jonathan, Shemot / Exodus 2:1-10

And Amram, a man of the tribe of Levi, went and returned to live in marriage with Jokeved his wife, whom he had put away on account of the decree of Pharoh. [JERUSALEM. And there went a man of the tribe of Levi and took Jokeved, who was beloved of him, (or, who was related to him,) to wife.] And she was the daughter of a hundred and thirty years when he returned to her; but a miracle was wrought in her, and she returned unto youth as she was, when in her minority she was called the daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bare a son at the end of six months; and she saw him to be a child of steadfastness, (or, of steadfast life,) and hid him three months, which made the number nine. But she could conceal him no longer, for the Mizraee had become aware of him. And she took an ark of papyrus, (tunes,) and coated it with bitumen and pitch, and placed the child within it, and laid him among the reeds on the bank of the river. And Miriam his sister stood at a distance to take knowledge of what would be done to him. And the Word of the Lord sent forth a burning sore and inflammation of the flesh upon the land of Mizraim; and the daughter of Pharoh came down to refresh herself at the river. And her handmaids, walking upon the bank of the river, saw the ark among the reeds, and put forth the arm and took it, and were immediately healed of the burning and inflammation. And she opened, and saw the child, and, behold, the babe wept; and she had compassion upon him, and said, This is

one of the children of the Jehudaeae. And his sister said to Pharoh's daughter, May I go and call for thee a nursing woman from the Jehudesses, to suckle the babe for thee ? And Pharoh's daughter said, Go; and the damsel went and called the child's mother. And the daughter of Pharoh said, Take this child and suckle it for me, and I will give thee thy wages And the woman took the child and suckled him. And the child grew, and was brought to Pharoh's daughter, and he was beloved by her as a son; and she called his name Mosheh, Because, said she, I drew him out of the water of the river. [JERUSALEM. I uplifted him.]

In the Aramaic Targum we are given a name of the man (Amram) and the name of the daughter of Levi (Jocheved). We are told that he put her away but then he returned to her when she was 130 years old. The Lord performed a miracle and she was transformed back to her youth in order to have a son. The rabbis say that Moshe was born premature at 6 months, because of his mother hiding him for 3 months making a total of 9 months. His mother placed him into a basket and laid him among the reeds, and the Lord God sent a plague of sores on Egypt, and Pharaoh's daughter came down to relieve herself in the river because of the sores. Her taking Moshe out of the river caused her sores to be healed, and they found the Hebrew mother, she was paid to wean the child, and then Pharaoh's daughter named the baby Moshe because she had drawn him out of the river. What we learn from the Targum is that the Lord performed miracle after miracle in order to cause His words to come to pass, as he had spoken to Abraham, that He would raise up a deliverer for Israel.

The rabbis have much to say concerning how the Lord God brought about the miracle of Moshe in the midst of an enslaved people.

Ramban on Exodus 2:2, Part 1

וּתְרָא *SHE SAW THAT HE WAS GOOD AND SHE HID HIM: The explanation that she hid him because of [something special] that she saw in him is false. All babies elicit the compassion of their mothers. Rather one must explain [the verb] SHE SAW (וּתְרָא) like in the verse (Gen. 1:31), "God saw (יָרַע) all that he had made and found it very*

good.” There the phrase means that [God] looked and examined all His works and His actions that He had done to see whether there was something to correct therein; everything was proper and correct. Here also, since Moses was born [prematurely] after [a pregnancy of only] six months--just as we find that Samuel was born [after a six-month pregnancy, as it is written (I Sam. 1:20) לתקופות יהימים i.e. after two tequfot and two [more] days.

Rambam the rationalist interprets the verse to say that it was not that his mother had seen something special in the boy, but due to his premature birth, she saw He was healthy and she loved him. Jocheved examining Moshe is in the context of what the Lord God did examining His creation, that all was good, and nothing needed correcting. Similarly, Jocheved examined her son and found the work of God’s hand was good and so she hid him for three months.

Rashbam on Exodus 2:10, Part 1

משיתיהו. *As if to say: משכתיהו, “I pulled him forth.” We know that the word used here is also used elsewhere in connection with pulling something out of the water, as in Psalms 18:17 ימשני ממים רבים, “He drew me out of the mighty waters.” The construction follows the same pattern as with the root קנה the intransitive form of which parallel to ours would be קניתיהו, “I have acquired him, whereas the transitive mode, הפעיל would be יקנני, yakneyni in the future tense, “he will acquire me.”*

Sforno on Exodus 2:10, Part 1

ותקרא שמו משה, *someone who will save others by pulling them out of their calamity.*

Or HaChaim on Exodus 2:10, Part 1

”And she called his name, etc. and she said, etc.” Here we find a difference from the way Yitzchak and Yaakov and the tribes were named. For all of them, the meaning came be-

fore the name itself. For Yitzchak, (Breisheet 21:6), [Sarah said] “anyone who hears will laugh (Yitzchak) etc.” and that is when she named him Yitzchak. For Yaakov, (Breisheet 25:26), ‘his hand was holding the heel (Ekev) [of Esav] and he called him Yaakov.’ With the tribes, [Leah said], ‘For Hashem saw ... and she called him Reuven.’ (Breisheet 29:32), “For Hashem heard ... and she called him Shimon.” (Breisheet 29:33) and so on in this manner.

Sforno on Exodus 2:10, Part 2

וְתֹאמַר כִּי מִן הַמַּיִם מִשִּׁיתָהּ, the reason why I called him thus is so that he in turn would rescue others from their problems, just as I have pulled him out of the water (in which he would have drowned.) She considered the find as decreed by a higher power (compare Daniel, 4,14) Moses was saved only so that in his life he would become the instrument of saving others.

Moshe's name was given to indicate how he was drawn out of the water, Rashbam says that his name is connected to pulling something out of the water. Sforno states that having been saved out of the water, Moshe was named in such a way to indicate what he would do at a future time, that he would save others by pulling them out of their calamity. Or Ha-Chaim draws a parallel to the way one is named, and the meaning of the name coming before or after the event that inspired the name. Isaac is used as an example, that Abraham's wife said that *“anyone who hears will laugh”* where she named Isaac based upon a future expectation of an event. Moshe on the other hand was named as a result of a past event and a future expectation of his saving others. Sforno claims that when Pharaoh's daughter pulled Moshe out of the river, she believed finding this baby was the work of a higher power, and the reason Moshe was saved so so he could save others at a future time. So the basic concept that may be drawn from Parashat Shoftim on Moshe's name is that his name provided a future expectation of his actions, that he would save others.

What is interesting is a similar fashion as Or Chaim, the name is given to the Messiah before the events had taken place. Looking at the Textus Receptus or the Codex Alexandrinus (Greek Manuscripts) in *Matthew*

1:1, the Greek text is an allusion to the Hebrew and Aramaic languages when we read Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. The Greek text says “... *Jesus Christ son of David son of Avraham.*” Based on the first sentence in the Apostolic Writings, we understand that the Author is bringing concepts from the Torah, referring to Abraham and from the Neviim (Prophets) referring to David. In this single verse the names of David (Δαυὶδ) and Avraham (Ἀβραάμ) are transliterated into the Greek Language by the author of the book of Matthew. The object of the sentence is the one who is referred to in *Matthew 1:1* as being the son of David and the son of Abraham, Yeshua (Ἰησοῦ) the Messiah. In similar form as that of Moshe, Yeshua was named such based upon the Hebraic understanding that “*He will save*” ישׁע (“*yoshia*”) found in the name “*Yeshua*” (ישׁוע). The name Yeshua reveals to us what he will do at a future time, similar to what we read in Parashat Shemot on the name of Moshe. Moshe was named to indicate the way he would save others at a future time. The meaning of the name Yeshua (ישׁוע) is provided for us explicitly within the text in *Matthew 1:21*, where the NASB renders the verse as “*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yeshua), for he will save his people from their sins.*” As we read according to the rabbis on the name of Moshe, the name of Yeshua is given in the Apostolic Writings in a very Hebraic way, for the purpose of saving people. The Hebraic concept here is defined by understanding what the child will do at a future time. This is expressed hebraically by the phrase “*tell me what you have done,*” or “*what will you do?*” According to *Matthew 1:21* the Messiah came into the world, being sent by the Lord to save people. Yeshua, ישׁוע is the Christ, Messiah, Savior, and King, the son of David and son of Abraham. Yeshua is a prophet like unto Moshe!

